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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000025

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, IO; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

USUN NEW YORK FOR POL:ETUNIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV CE UN

SUBJECT: In meeting with MFA officials, Mission urges an improvement in Sri Lanka's UN voting record

Refs: (A) 02 USUN New York 3135 (Notal)

- (B) USUN-Colombo class e-mail 12/17/02
- (C) USUN-Colombo class e-mail 11/23/02

(U) Classified by Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

¶1. (C) In a January 6 meeting, DCM and Polchief met with Sri Lankan MFA officials Rodney Perera, Director (Americas), and W.A.T. Gunatilleke, Acting Director (Middle East/Africa). DCM noted that we had reviewed Sri Lanka's voting record at the recent UNGA and were disappointed that its delegation had not voted with the U.S. more often. To underscore this point, DCM provided Perera a copy of Sri Lanka's voting record re First Committee disarmament issues (see Ref C). The record indicated that the GSL had voted differently from the U.S. on 13 of 14 occasions. In addition, we understood that Sri Lanka had not been particularly helpful on Israeli practices issues (see Ref B). We were also disappointed that Sri Lanka's permrep (C. Mahendran) had been quoted as making remarks harsh in tone toward the U.S. at times.

¶2. (C) Perera responded that many of Sri Lanka's votes were decided by "Non-Aligned Movement" (NAM) countries meeting as a bloc. DCM said he understood that. The U.S. had excellent bilateral ties with the GSL, however, and we wanted to cooperate as productively as possible in multilateral settings, too. We were willing to work with the MFA in order to accomplish this.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Mission will continue to work with the GSL on this important matter. Sri Lanka's current government is basically very pro-U.S. (witness its signing of an ICC Article 98 bilateral agreement in November). It is unfortunate that this general orientation has not affected the GSL's UN voting record in any substantive way. We think a big part of the problem is the MFA, which seems -- as it has for years -- to buy off on NAM, G-77 ways of thinking. In addition, Permrep Mahendran has not proven as receptive to U.S. views as we would like. We plan to review this matter with political-level officials, such as key ministers Milinda Moragoda and G.L. Peiris, once they return from the fourth round of talks with the Tamil Tigers in Thailand. END COMMENT.

¶4. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS